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Green River Watershed News

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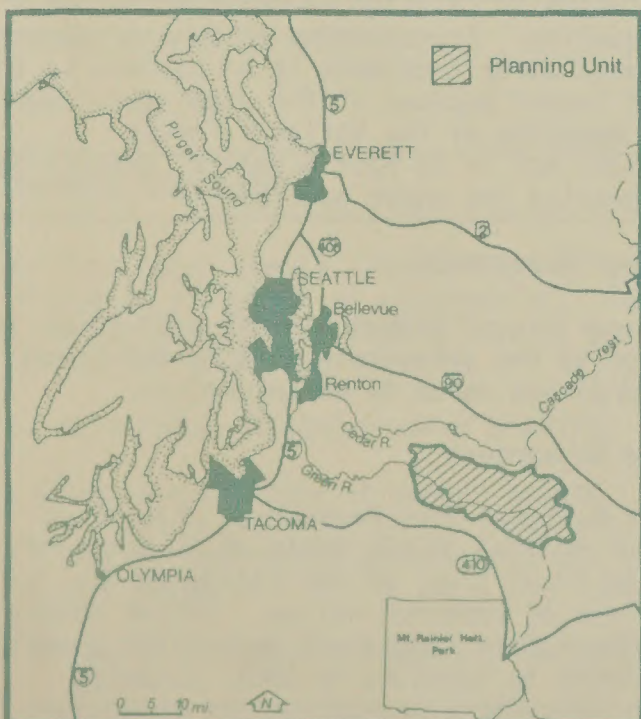
Introduction

This is the first issue of the Green River Newsletter. It will be published periodically to keep the public informed about the progress of the Green River Study currently being conducted by the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. The purpose of the study is to develop a comprehensive land and resource management plan for National Forest lands in the Green River drainage.

The 146,000-acre planning unit covers the Green River watershed. The study will provide a management plan for the 50,000 acres of National Forest land within the watershed. Located some 50 miles due east of Tacoma, the watershed is the source of the municipal and industrial water supply for that city, serving some 185,000 people.

The study will be conducted by the U.S. Forest Service in coordination with the City of Tacoma and with assistance from other landowners and parties with a vested use of the natural resources in the area. The major landowners in the watershed are the Forest Service (34%), Burlington Northern, Inc. (29%), Weyerhaeuser Company (17%), and the City of Tacoma (7%).

Initiation of the study was announced in May 1977. At that time the Forest Service asked the public for information on special attributes of the Green River Watershed study area which were not generally known, so that they could be considered during the planning process.



Status Report

A forest interdisciplinary team has been appointed to develop the plan. The team leader is Dwayne Siex, planner on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Before his appointment as team leader, Dwayne worked for two years on the North Bend Ranger District, spending much of his time working in the Green River drainage.

The interdisciplinary team is responsible for coordinating the many aspects of the planning activity. It is made up of Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest specialists in the following areas: soils and geology, hydrology, transportation planning, cultural resources, land classification, recreation management, visual resource management, fish and wildlife, fire management, public involvement, logging systems, timber management and economics.

The team has been collecting basic data for the various resources. And, working with the other landowners in the watershed, they identified issues, concerns and opportunities that need to be addressed.

The next step in the planning process is to design a set of alternatives for consideration and evaluation.

NFMA Required Alternatives

The plan is being prepared as directed by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) passed by Congress in 1976.

The NFMA requires that a "reasonable range" of alternatives be considered in each plan. It directs also that the following four specific alternatives must be considered:

1. No-Action Alternative (No change.)

This alternative would consider the management situation as it now exists in the Green River drainage. It is shown as a sample alternative further on in the newsletter.

2. Elimination of Backlog Alternative

At least one alternative is to be considered that would eliminate any backlog of treatment needed to restore renewable resources. An example might include identification and prescribed treatment of old harvest (logging) areas requiring reforestation.

3. Meet Regional Goals Alternative

The Pacific Northwest Region of the U. S. Forest Service consists of Oregon and Washington. The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 requires the Regional Forester to develop a program containing resource production targets. The Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, as a part of the Pacific Northwest Region, has been assigned a certain portion of the Region's goals; and the Green River watershed, in turn, has a portion of the Forest's goals to meet.

4. Resolve Issues and Concerns Alternatives

Certain issues, concerns, and opportunities have been identified in the development of the Green River Plan. Some alternatives are to be developed which address these issues and concerns.

Issues, Concerns and Opportunities

Issues, concerns, and opportunities that were identified are:

A. Transportation Planning

A coordinated main access transportation system plan needs to be developed within the Green River drainage. It will include road management aspects.

B. Recreational Opportunities

1. Public entry and the resultant recreational use is another primary concern. U. S. Forest Service multiple use policies encourage use of National Forest land including recreational use by the public. The Watershed is effectively closed, however, (through City of Tacoma agreements with private landowners and the U.S. Corps of Engineers) to all recreational use west of the townsite of Lester.

The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services has stated that changes in public use of the Watershed would require installation of full water treatment facilities to comply with the State Board of Health Regulations and the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-523). Annual full treatment costs would be in the multi-million dollar range. The question to be answered is: How can recreational use be permitted and water quality protected?

2. The Forest Off-Road Vehicle Use plan identifies certain roads and trails open for motorized use in the Green River drainage.

Many portions of these roads and trails are, in fact, on private land, are closed to public use, and users are subject to arrest for trespassing. The city is concerned that access restrictions should be shown on these roads and trails within the Green River drainage.

C. Flood Potential Identification

There have been two major floods in the watershed in the past 5 years. Each one caused thousands of dollars worth of damage to roads, bridges, stream channels, etc. Flood history must be considered in making decisions relating to planning in the watershed.

D. Land Ownership Pattern

The checkerboard pattern of ownership in the watershed is a definite disadvantage in managing the land as it is necessary to coordinate activities in the public and private ownerships. Since the objectives of these ownerships differ, so do their land management philosophies. Complex and costly problems result, involving road construction, rights-of-way agreements, fire control responsibilities and efforts, access, and etc. This management plan will determine which land should be in private ownership and which should be in public ownership.

E. Fisheries Habitat Assessment

At present, there is no provision for anadromous fish to pass around Howard Hanson Dam and make use of the rearing potential of the Green River above the dam. Resident fish habitat and population in the Green River drainage is a concern, also.

F. Wildlife

There is no management prescription for elk or deer in the Green River drainage at the present time. This plan will provide the land manager objectives to use in his management practices that will affect elk and deer habitat in the drainage.

G. Water Quality

This drainage is the primary water source for the City of Tacoma. Management activities must be discussed in relation to their effect on water quality. Any activity that might require additional water treatment is of concern to the City of Tacoma because of the high cost. One of the mandates of the National Forest Management Act is to have a goal of protecting and improving the water quality.

H. Timber Management

The proper mix of timber harvest activities in relation to the other resources in the Green River drainage needs to be determined.

I. Fire Management

Current National Fire Protection objectives call for control of all fires at 10 acres or less, by 10:00 a.m., of the following day, regardless of resource values. Recent changes in national fire management objectives direct the Forests to identify in their planning efforts specific fire suppression objectives

consistent with resource values and uses. Accordingly, this information will be developed for the Green River drainage.

Public Involvement

Public involvement is an important facet of developing any management plan for National Forest lands. The objective of public involvement is to provide citizens the opportunity to participate in resource planning and decision-making to insure that their interests are being considered. Information offered by an informed public results in a fuller range of resource uses to be evaluated in the final plan, and this helps the Forest Service to make better management decisions.

At this point in the Green River planning process we are asking the public to let us know the kinds of alternatives they want us to consider.

Alternatives to be Considered

We have listed the NFMA-required alternatives and the issues, concerns and opportunities that were identified for the Green River planning unit. Now we would like you to design some alternatives you feel should be considered.

An alternative consists of a specific set of management practices dealing with each of the resources in the planning unit. Some important things to keep in mind are:

Energy conservation.

Water quality.

Wildlife habitat protection.

Wood production.

Recreational opportunity.

Watershed administration.
Closed or open to public use.

Fire management.

Sample Alternatives

We list these sample alternatives as examples of how to structure an alternative. Each has an overall objective with a list of components to support that objective.

1. Objective: Maximize water quality.

- Close the drainage to public access.
- Allow no new access points into the drainage for any reason.
- Allow no recreational uses in the drainage.
- Consolidate National Forest ownership south and east of Lester and eliminate National Forest ownership in the rest of the drainage.

- Maintain present elk herd but allow no hunting.

- No fishing allowed.

- Reduce the present timber harvest.

- Protect cultural values in the drainage.

- Follow visual resource management guidelines for scenic values. (Amtrack passes through the drainage; and the Pacific Crest Trail traverses the east boundary).

2. Objective: Maintain the watershed as it now exists. Current management practices in the watershed to continue without change.

- Allow no public access from the west but continue seasonal access from the east.

- Allow no new access points into the drainage.

- Keep the present checkerboard pattern of land ownership.

- Timber harvest activity would remain the same.

- Maintain present elk and deer herds.

- Protect cultural values according to law.

- Meet the visual resource management objectives when possible.

- Protect threatened and endangered species.

Developing Alternatives

To develop an alternative you may revise one of the sample alternatives or design an entirely new one. Please state the objective in each alternative that you give, to clarify your intent. Each alternative you give us for inclusion in the plan will be considered by the interdisciplinary team, and the final range of alternatives developed will reflect the concerns identified by the public. Most similar plans that have been completed by the Forest Service have contained from five to seven alternatives.

Workshops

Public workshops to assist you in developing alternatives to be considered for the Green River Management Plan will be held in Tacoma and Seattle as follows:

Seattle

Date: Tuesday, June 19, 1979

Time: 7:30 pm - 10:00 pm or later, if necessary.

Location: Conference Room A,
Center House,
Seattle Center.

Tacoma

Date: Wednesday, June 20, 1979

Time: 7:30 pm - 10:00 pm or later, if necessary

Location: Utilities Auditorium
3628 S. 35th

At the beginning of each workshop there will be a presentation about the planning process, the history of National Forest land in the watershed, and instructions on developing an alternative. The public will spend the remainder of the evening in work groups, developing alternatives. Resource personnel from the Forest Service and the City of Tacoma will be present to answer questions; and basic resource data and maps will be available for reference.

People who do not attend the workshops, may send written suggestions for alternatives directly to the Forest Supervisor, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, 1601 2nd Avenue Building, Seattle, Washington 98101. They must be received not later than July 6, 1979.

What Happens Next?

The Draft Environmental Statement for the Green River drainage will be released in 1980. Those people whose names are on the Green River Study mailing list will be notified when the Statement is available for review. If you are not on the mailing list and would like to be, or know of others who would, please send the names and addresses to the Forest Supervisor at the address listed above.

Freedom of Information Act

Mailing lists and public comments in planning activities are open for public inspection under the federal Freedom of Information Act.

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